



## The connection between Diet, Exercise, and Sleep

**Did you know... Up to a third of your lifetime will be spent sleeping.**

Raise your hand if you enjoy sleep. We can all agree that proper sleep is essential to our health but only when we get enough. How do you typically feel after a night of poor sleep? Groggy? Unfocused? If so, you are not out of the norm. Sleep deprivation leaves your brain exhausted, so it can't perform its duties like eating and exercising. Almost one third of adults get less than six hours per night, much less than the recommended seven to nine hours. Without enough sleep, people tend to overeat and choose unhealthy foods. Those who are sleep deprived are more drawn towards high calorie foods. Lack of sleep can also affect your hormones that control your hunger and fullness. This can cause excessive snacking and overeating.

Now what about exercise? A lack of sleep can make you feel too tired to exercise as well. Okay, but what's the good news? People who engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity can see a dramatic increase in their sleep quality, especially that same night. Recognizing these connections can help to improve your overall health, including your nutrition, physical activity, and sleep.

**According to the National Sleep Foundation, most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.**



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Tips and tricks on how to improve your sleep!



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What benefit does fiber have on your sleep?



### Here are some tips to improve both your sleep quality and quantity.

1. Try to have dinner earlier in the evening and avoid snacking too close to bed.
2. Avoid caffeine later in the day. This can include any stimulants such as coffee, energy drinks, soda, or tea.
3. Move your body. Schedule regular exercise to improve your sleep.
4. Get some light. Try spending some time or exercising outdoors - exposure to natural light during the day can help keep your body in sync.
5. Try to go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning.
6. Refrain from using electronic devices right before bed, including phones, computers, and tablets.
7. Spend an hour before bed doing relaxing activities.
8. Focus on increasing fiber in your diet.

Source: [sleepfoundation.org/physical-health/diet-exercise-sleep](https://sleepfoundation.org/physical-health/diet-exercise-sleep)

**Are you having trouble sleeping at night due to worrying about your next meal? Call 2-1-1 for resources available in your area.**

## Be Active. Eat Healthy!

This month, I will take action by...



# What is Insomnia?

Insomnia is a common sleep disorder characterized by a persistent difficulty to fall or remain asleep despite the opportunity to do so. Some may experience excessive daytime sleepiness and other cognitive impairments while they are awake that directly stem from sleep loss. Older adults are at high risk of insomnia as well as other sleep disorders such as sleep-disordered breathing or restless legs syndrome. Your sleep-wake cycles change and the quality of your sleep deteriorates as you age. Some studies suggest that, beginning in middle age, the average person loses 27 minutes of sleep per night for each subsequent decade.

According to experts, a person with insomnia must report at least one of the following symptoms despite having enough time allotted for sleep and a relatively comfortable sleep area:

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Repeated instances of waking up earlier than desired
- Feelings of resistance about going to bed at a reasonable time
- Difficulty sleeping without intervention from a caregiver



**According to current estimates, 10-30% of adults live with insomnia.**

**Be sure to speak with your doctor for concerns you may be suffering from insomnia.**

Source: [sleepfoundation.org/insomnia/older-adults](https://sleepfoundation.org/insomnia/older-adults)

**Fresh Conversations** is developed by: Iowa Dept. of Public Health [idph.iowa.gov/inn](https://idph.iowa.gov/inn)  
Iowa Dept. on Aging [iowaaging.gov](https://iowaaging.gov)

# What's fiber got to do, got to do with it?

Fiber has been shown to have so many health benefits such as lowering your cholesterol, blood sugar management, and can help you lose or maintain your weight. Researchers now have found increasing your prebiotic fiber could improve your sleep quality as well. What they found was when you lose sleep, you can also throw off the balance of good bacteria in your gut. Thankfully this also goes the opposite way, getting enough sleep helps to replenish the good bacteria in your gut. They also found that eating prebiotic-containing foods helps you to fall asleep faster and have longer periods of restful sleep. Good gut health has also been linked to strong immunity, weight loss, glowing skin, improved mental health, to name a few. Could there be any more reasons to love fiber?

Women need 25 grams of fiber per day; men should target 38 grams per day.



## Lentils, An Ageless Legume

- Lentils are high in potassium, folate, and fiber.
- Lentils contain prebiotics, which help feed the probiotics that support gut health.
- Add lentils to a pasta sauce to make it heartier.
- Toss into salads or fold into omelets before cooking.
- Replace or supplement some of the meat in stews, chili, tacos, or casseroles with lentils.

### Prebiotic Fiber Rich Foods

**Whole Grain Bread & Pasta**  
**Walnuts**  
**Bananas**

**Beans**  
**Onions**  
**Garlic**  
**Asparagus**

Source: [eatingwell.com/article/7677155/eating-more-fiber-could-help-you-get-a-better-nights-sleep/](http://eatingwell.com/article/7677155/eating-more-fiber-could-help-you-get-a-better-nights-sleep/)  
Source: [intermountainhealthcare.org/blogs/topics/live-well/2016/03/surprising-health-benefits-of-a-fiber-rich-diet/](http://intermountainhealthcare.org/blogs/topics/live-well/2016/03/surprising-health-benefits-of-a-fiber-rich-diet/)

## Physical Activity and Sleep

One of the almost immediate benefits of physical activity is the positive impact it has on your sleep. Being active makes it easier for you to fall asleep and sleep more soundly at night. We know physical activity literally tires you out, and that reduces the time it takes for you to fall asleep at night. The activity doesn't have to be vigorous or at a certain time of the day. Just being active during the day, such as taking a short walk, can make it easier to fall asleep at night. Physical activity also helps you sleep better throughout the night.



**The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans show several improved sleep outcomes associated with physical activity including: Increased sleep efficiency, sleep quality, deep sleep, and reduced daytime sleepiness.**

Need help finding a food pantry, free hot meals or community garden?  
Call 2-1-1 for resources available in your area.



# Lentil Tacos



**Serves 6, 2 tacos per serving, \$1.09 per serving**

## Ingredients:

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 tablespoon oil (canola or vegetable)                    | 3 cups water             |
| 1 onion, diced  | 12 corn tortillas        |
| 2 cloves garlic, diced (or ¼ teaspoon garlic powder)      | 1 cup salsa              |
| 1 cup dried lentils                                       | 2 cups lettuce, shredded |
| ½ package (1.25 ounces) of 40% less sodium taco seasoning |                          |

## Instructions:

1. Heat the oil in a skillet over medium high heat.
2. Add the onion and garlic and cook for 4-6 minutes or until they become soft and fragrant. Stir several times during cooking. Add the lentils and seasoning. Stir so that the seasoning is mixed in.
3. Slowly add the water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium low and cover. Cook for about 30 minutes or until the lentils are tender.
4. Uncover and cook for 5 minutes more until the mixture has thickened and the liquid is absorbed. Mash slightly with a fork.
5. Heat corn tortillas according to package directions.
6. Spread ¼ cup lentil mixture onto each tortilla.
7. Serve with salsa, cheese, and lettuce.

## Tips:

- **Freeze lentil mixture leftovers up to 3 months.**
- **Use this lentil mixture with ground beef or turkey!**

**Nutrition Information (per 2 tacos): 350 calories, 11 g fat, 480 mg sodium, 8 g fiber, 16 g protein, 51 g carbohydrates**



## Word Search

Lentils	Caffeine	Microbiome
Prebiotic	Garlic	Fatigue
Fiber	Electronics	Exercise
Insomnia	Pasta	Walnuts

S G Z T O P Q I U A D W  
V T G P J O N U T P F E  
L H U F R S P K Q C R F  
A Q Y N O E Q A I D A I  
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R A V M N S W U C I B F  
E B K E H W G Q O G Q F  
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E L E C T R O N I C S C

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